



**RECOVERING THE STORIES:
A BRIEF PICTORIAL HISTORY**



Bishop C.L. Morton with members of
Mount Zion Church

Partners



WINDSOR LAW
Centre for Cities



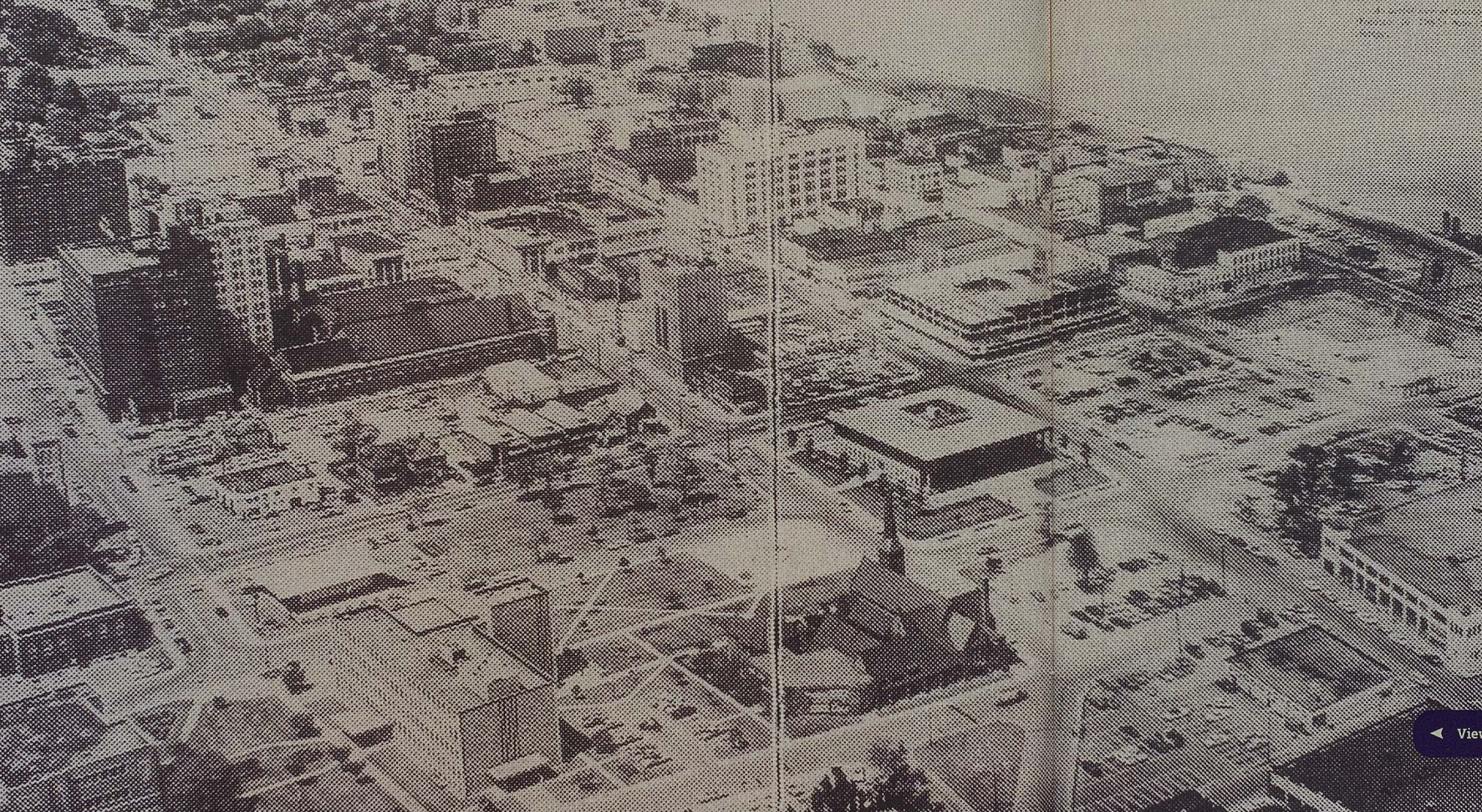
University
of Windsor



Essex County
BLACK HISTORICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Parallel 42





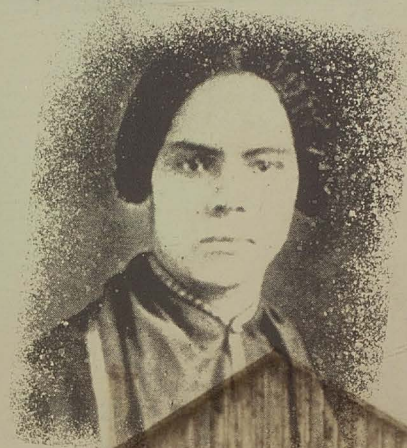
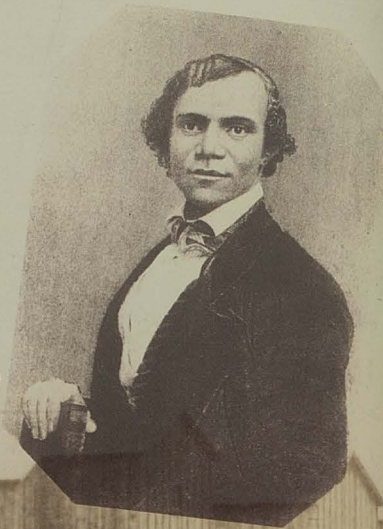
Windsor, like most major cities across Canada during the twentieth century, was home to a dynamic Black community located in the metropolitan core. Situated to the east of the commercial district, the McDougall Street Corridor was a mostly self-sufficient African Canadian community bound roughly by Riverside Drive East, Goyeau Street, Giles Street East, and Howard Avenue.

◀ View of Windsor in the mid twentieth century

This historic neighbourhood emerged during the mid-nineteenth century as African American freedom seekers and free people of colour crossed the Detroit River in search of refuge from enslavement and oppression in the United States. Abolitionists also settled in the community, eager to provide much needed support. After setting up a school in 1851 in former barracks on the current site of City Hall Square, Mary Ann Shadd (later Cary) established a newspaper, The Provincial Freeman, to share

the stories of the growing Black community and galvanize support for the anti-slavery cause. In 1853, abolitionists Mary Miles Bibb and Henry Bibb moved from Sandwich to Windsor, relocating the offices of The Voice of the Fugitive newspaper and opening a new school in which 69 children enrolled almost immediately.

► Henry Bibb



◀ Mary Ann Shadd Cary

Abandoned military barracks in Windsor used as a refugee reception centre in the 1850s

Tower of Freedom Monument by artist Ed Dwight

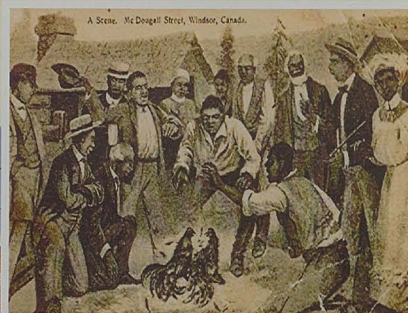


After the conclusion of the American Civil War and the end of the Underground Railroad movement, Windsor's Black population continued to increase as families and individuals of African descent from rural areas of Southwestern Ontario moved into the Corridor, seeking employment and opportunities. While some experienced dire hardship, such as the families served by the Catholic Colored Mission of Windsor, most joined forces to create a self-sustaining, resilient Black business and residential district that thrived for over a century.

A crowd gathered at the Reaching Out mural



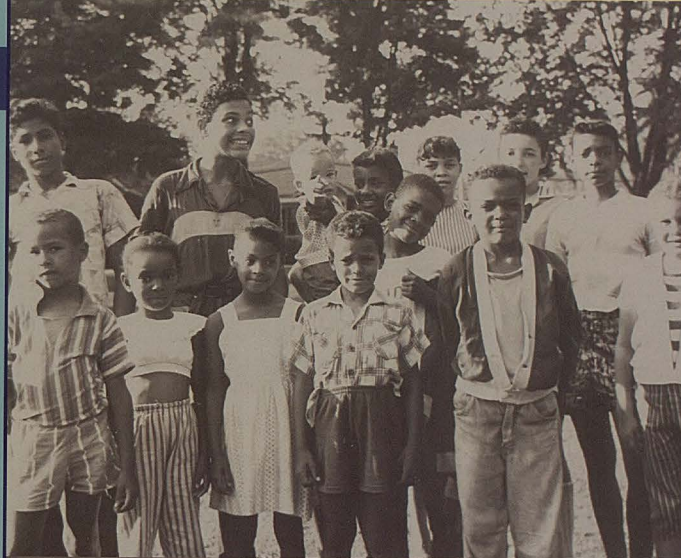
▼ An early twentieth century postcard produced as promotional memorabilia by the Bee Cigar Company, printed in Germany, is steeped in anti-Black imagery. While it represents an unflattering interpretation of the McDougall Street Corridor through the racist gaze of that era, it demonstrates that there was widespread awareness of a Black community there.



from the archives of
Northeast Cultural Community Centre
225A Erie Street East, Windsor, ON
N9A 3X2 519-252-7143

Determined to build a strong community, residents founded churches, businesses, social clubs, activist organizations, halls, and a credit union. Generations of McDougall Street Corridor residents found creative ways to combat the discrimination they faced as a people, while providing services they were often denied elsewhere.

Children at a picnic

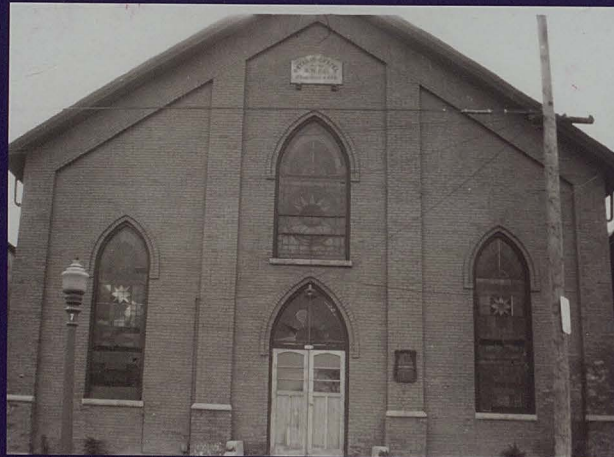


A church gathering, 1950s



Churches such as the Tanner African Methodist Episcopal Church, First Baptist Church, Ontario Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church, Mount Zion Church of God in Christ, and others provided not only spiritual guidance and opportunities for worship but community support, educational and social programs, and a place for activism and civic engagement to thrive. Social and racial justice organizations such as the Central Citizens' Association, War Mothers' Protective League, Hour-a-Day Study Club, and various mutual aid organizations grew out of these faith communities. Then from 1936 to 1962, vibrant gospel music and powerful preaching from Mount Zion Church of God in Christ were amplified well beyond the Detroit River borderlands due to Bishop C.L. Morton's weekly radio show.

Top: First Baptist Church
Bottom: BME Church

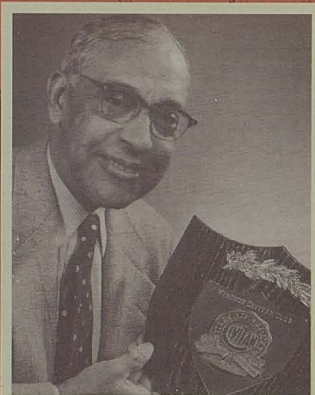


Miss Sepia Pageant Contestants. Despite the faraway places named on their sashes annually, most participants were local.

The McDougall Street Corridor was, among other things, a thriving Black business district. There, Black community members could shop or receive services in a welcoming environment or could start businesses of their own. Nineteenth century businesses in the Corridor included Hyatt's Green Houses and Dunn Paint and Varnish Company. Later, small businesses of all kinds were located there

alongside Windsor's only Black-owned hotel, the Walker House, and the Fellowship of Coloured Churches Credit Union or Coloured Community Credit Union. Residents could expect compassionate, culturally competent care at the offices of physicians Dr. Henry D. Taylor, Dr. Othello P. Chatters, and Dr. William Kenneth Rock as well as dentists Dr. William C. Kelly and Dr. Roy Perry.

Dr. H.D. Taylor



The Walker House,
Windsor's only
Black-owned hotel



From the late nineteenth century to the post-war period of the twentieth century, Black residents of the McDougall Street Corridor formed such a powerful voting block that politicians of all backgrounds courted the Black vote regularly. Candidates' nights held at Landrum Hall were events not to be missed. Political events and discussions at the Walker House were so significant that in 1932, the Border Cities Star declared of the hotel's owner, "If you want to be a candidate in the Third Ward, you've got to be on the right side of George Smith." High levels of Black voter engagement made it possible for McDougall Street Corridor residents to be elected repeatedly to municipal office despite the heavy cloud of segregation and racism which hovered over many aspects of daily life. Businessmen James L. Dunn and Robert L. Dunn were each elected as school board trustees before serving as Windsor's first and second Black town councillors for two terms (1887, 1888) and seven terms respectively (1893, 1894, 1895, 1897, 1898, 1902, and 1903,) with Robert also running for Mayor in 1896. Plasterer and community leader Isaac Nolan was elected to council in 1913 and 1914. Dr. H.D. Taylor served from 1932 to 1962 on the Windsor Board of Education, including as Chair, and Dr. Roy Perry served as a City Councillor for nearly twenty years, 1949-1968, including a campaign for Mayor in 1958.

Labor at Landrum Hall

There will be a Labor organization meeting at the Landrum Hall on McDougall street (just back of the arena) at 8 o'clock this evening. Commissioner Bennett, candidate for mayor, and the other Labor candidates for office will speak.

Election Meeting In Landrum Hall

All aspirants to Windsor civic offices are invited to speak in Landrum Hall, McDougall street, tonight under auspices of the Central Citizens' Association. Announcement was made by the president, Morris DeShield, who reminded "Please take notice, that no member or group of members of our association have authority to promise support or votes to any candidate. But the organization as a body may support any candidate or candidates."



Robert L. Dunn

Over the generations, McDougall Street Corridor residents formed clubs and organizations dedicated to racial uplift and social justice. These clubs also provided social engagement and an authentically Black safe space. Members of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, an all-Black mutual aid and fraternal organization, enjoyed fellowship with a focus on temperance and morality while raising money for charitable causes. Black Masons and the Order of the Eastern Star likewise aimed to foster racial uplift, mutual aid, and social justice.

Windsor Art and Literary Club

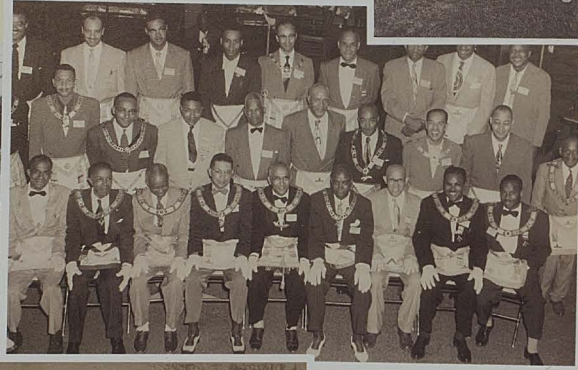
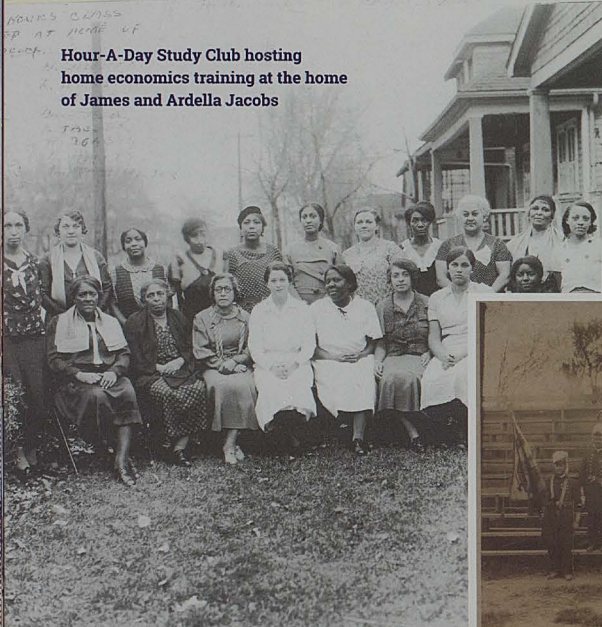


Established in 1924, the Windsor Art and Literary Club was an outlet for women of the McDougall Street Corridor to discuss their interests in the arts, literature, and current events and to support local education and civil rights initiatives.

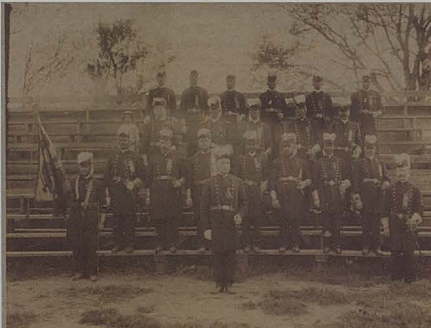
Founded in 1934 as the Mothers' Club, the Hour-a-Day Study Club has encouraged education, literacy, and civic engagement for decades,

eventually organizing an annual scholarship program which supports Black post-secondary students to this day. Known for lavish brunches, luncheons, galas, dances, and fundraisers, the Pivots' International Club was created as an outlet for Black women to participate in female empowerment, community building, education, and social outreach, and offered scholarships.

Hour-A-Day Study Club hosting home economics training at the home of James and Ardella Jacobs



A gathering of Masons



Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in Wigle Park, 1920s



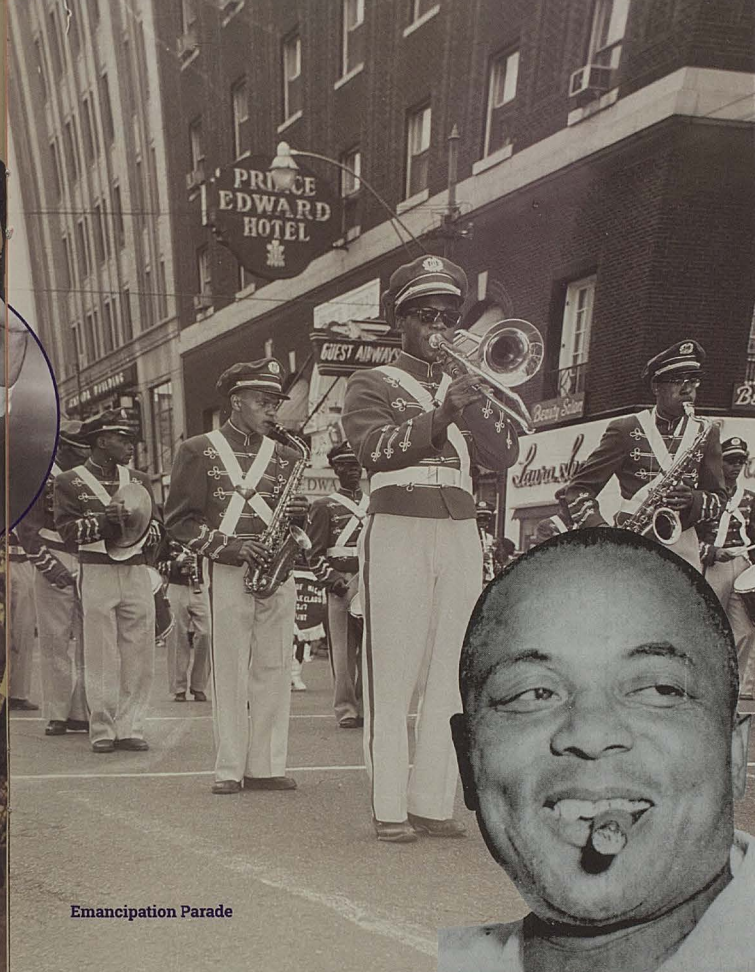
Members of the Pivots' Club

Residents of the McDougall Street Corridor participated in a variety of sports and recreational activities. Elite Black baseball teams battled at Wigle Park in warm weather months while in winter, children of the Corridor enjoyed skating there. Founded in 1940, the Armstead Athletic Club helped Black residents to access recreational activities denied to them elsewhere, particularly tennis, promoted physical activity and education, and eventually offered scholarships. Beginning in 1943 on a homemade rink and eventually at Wigle Park or Windsor Arena, an annual skating party hosted by Roy and Charlotte Perry treated local children to free skating, hot dogs, hot chocolate, and ice cream, with more than two thousand children ultimately participating in peak years. Established in 1925, the Frontier Social Club offered meeting space as well as music, dancing, and a delightful atmosphere for gatherings. Young people had opportunities to excel academically and athletically at Mercer Street School and Patterson Collegiate Institute. One alumnus, Fred Thomas, was a gifted multi-sport athlete, playing football for the Toronto Argonauts, basketball for the Harlem Globetrotters, and baseball for the Detroit Senators, Farnham Pirates, and Wilkes-Barre Barons, a farm team of the Cleveland Indians through which he integrated the Eastern League. Only racism, not ability, limited his progress in professional sports.

Top: Cock Brothers Baseball Team

Middle: Fred Thomas

Bottom: Dayus Roofing Baseball Team



Emancipation Parade

Emancipation, commemorating the abolition of slavery across the British empire on August 1, 1834, was celebrated in Black communities including Windsor from the nineteenth century on, but in the twentieth century, Windsor's Emancipation celebrations became an extraordinary spectacle known as the Greatest Freedom Show on Earth. Walter Perry, founder and long-time President of the British American Association of Colored Brethren, wrote that "a group of forward-thinking coloured men and women of Detroit and Windsor met in 1935 to form the BAACB, through which it would plan an Emancipation Celebration which would be a credit to the race." For decades, every August, residents of the McDougall Street Corridor gathered in Jackson Park alongside guests from elsewhere in Ontario, Michigan, and beyond for the multi-day festival. Emancipation attracted numerous high-profile guest speakers, performers, and athletes from across Canada and the United States. The festival's annual Progress Magazine, often featuring editorials by Perry, shone a light on global and local Black success stories as well as advocating for social and racial justice across the Diaspora.

**Walter Perry,
Mr. Emancipation**

26TH

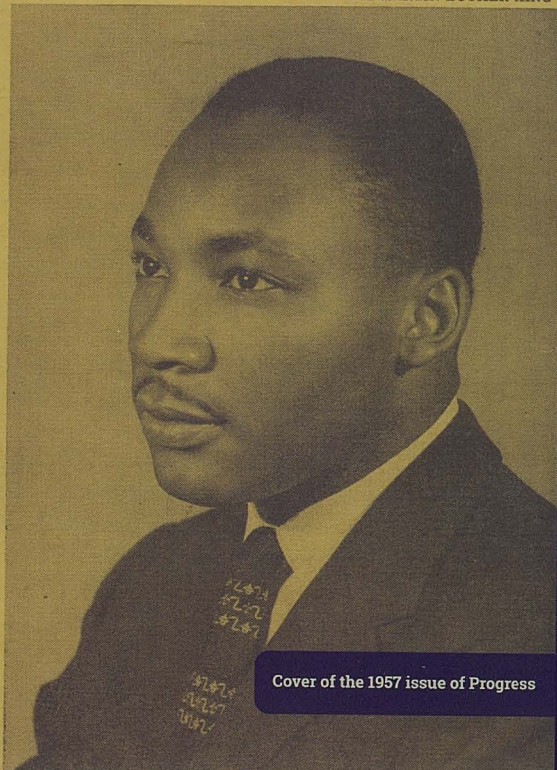
ANNIVERSARY

25 Cents

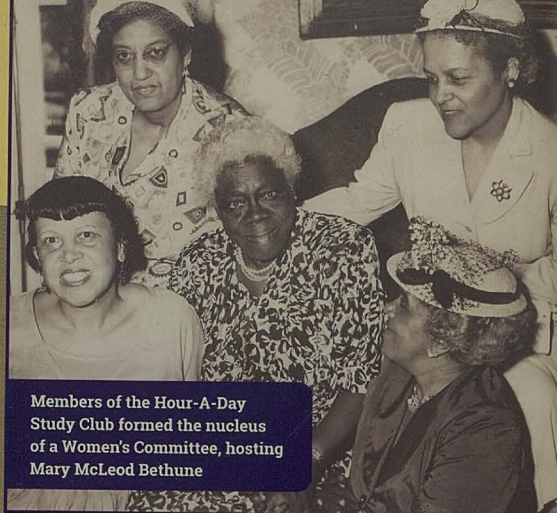
PROGRESS

THE OLDEST INTERNATIONAL COLOURED PUBLICATION
IN THE WORLD — EMANCIPATION — WINDSOR, ONT., 1957

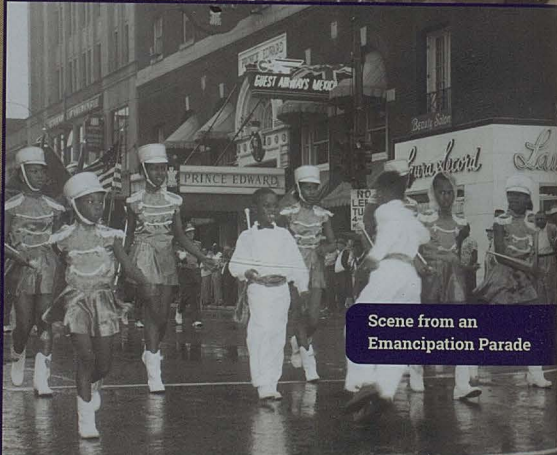
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING



Cover of the 1957 issue of Progress



Members of the Hour-A-Day Study Club formed the nucleus of a Women's Committee, hosting Mary McLeod Bethune



Scene from an Emancipation Parade

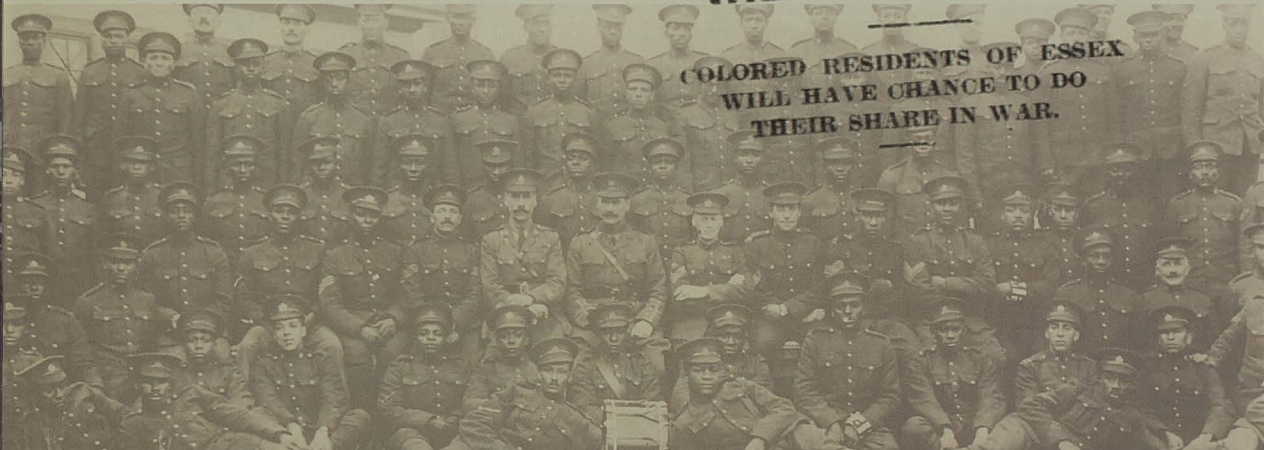
When the First World War began in 1914, many Black Canadian men were eager to enlist. Some succeeded but many were rejected. The outcry from Black community leaders and organizations persuaded the Department of Defence and Militia to authorize the formation of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, the largest Black unit in Canadian history, on July 5, 1916. That year, the Parker family home at 840 Mercer Street became the official recruiting office for the Battalion. More than 150 men enlisted there between 1916 to 1917, including many McDougall Street Corridor residents. Windsor's recruits were stationed on the grounds of the Windsor Jockey Club until they were moved to Truro, Nova Scotia in the fall of 1916.

In March 1917, the Battalion was deployed to France and remained

▼ Officers and members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion in Windsor, 1916

there until the end of the war. In the Second World War, Canadian men of African descent fought alongside soldiers and sailors of other ethnicities. In Windsor, several women in the McDougall Street Corridor formed the War Mothers' Protective League. They sent cards, letters, and care packages to Black Canadian men from Windsor who were serving in the military all over the world. In return, the soldiers and sailors sent many letters to the women of the War Mother's Protective League, expressing thanks and chronicling their experiences to the extent permissible in wartime.

**NEGRO BATTALION
WILL BE RECRUITED**



**COLORED RESIDENTS OF ESSEX
WILL HAVE CHANCE TO DO
THEIR SHARE IN WAR.**

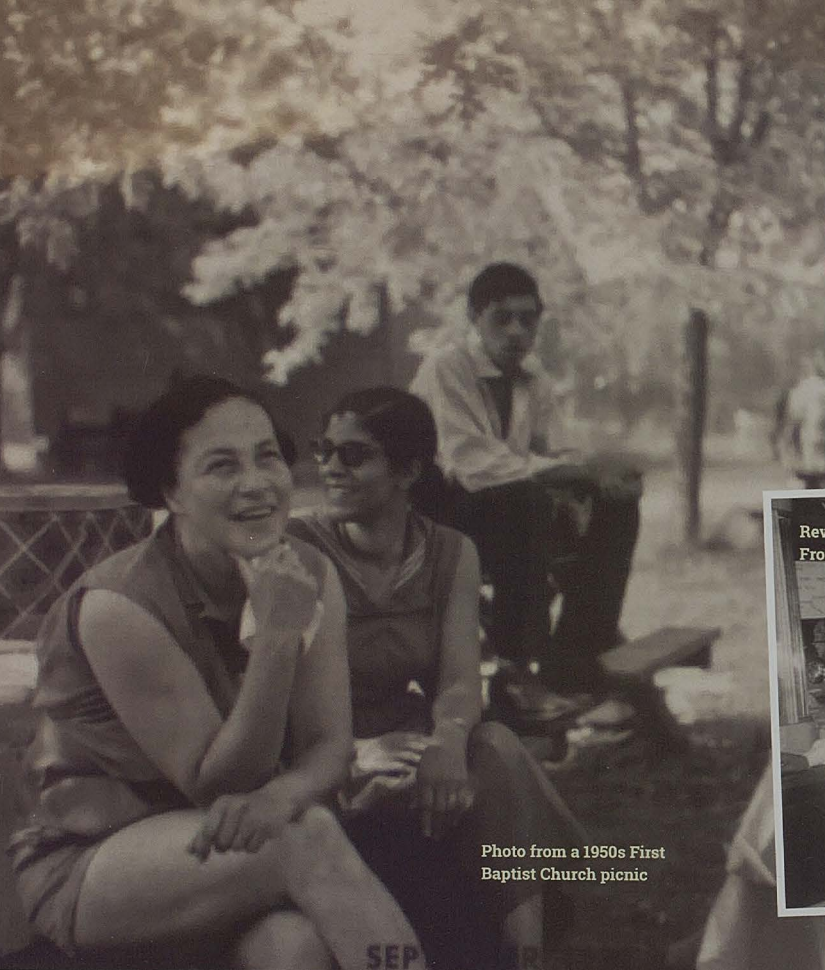
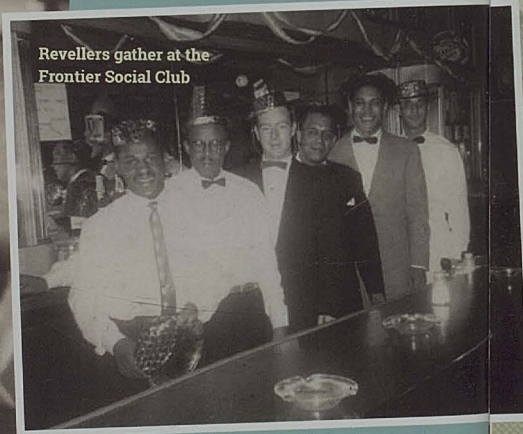


Photo from a 1950s First Baptist Church picnic

By 1941, Windsor's Black population numbered more than one thousand. A 1957 survey conducted by the Windsor Interracial Council recorded approximately 250 Black families living within the Corridor. The community was extremely close-knit. The neighbourhood served as a safe space within a city that was not always accommodating or kind to those of African descent.



Revellers gather at the Frontier Social Club



▲ Mercer Street and Assumption Street, June 1961.

Urban Renewal

In 1957, the City took the first steps toward an aggressive urban renewal program which would ultimately destroy historic Black churches, social halls, and multigenerational homes in the name of progress and modernization. Century-old buildings constructed by freedom seekers and their descendants disappeared from Windsor's landscape, forgotten by almost everyone but the Black community.

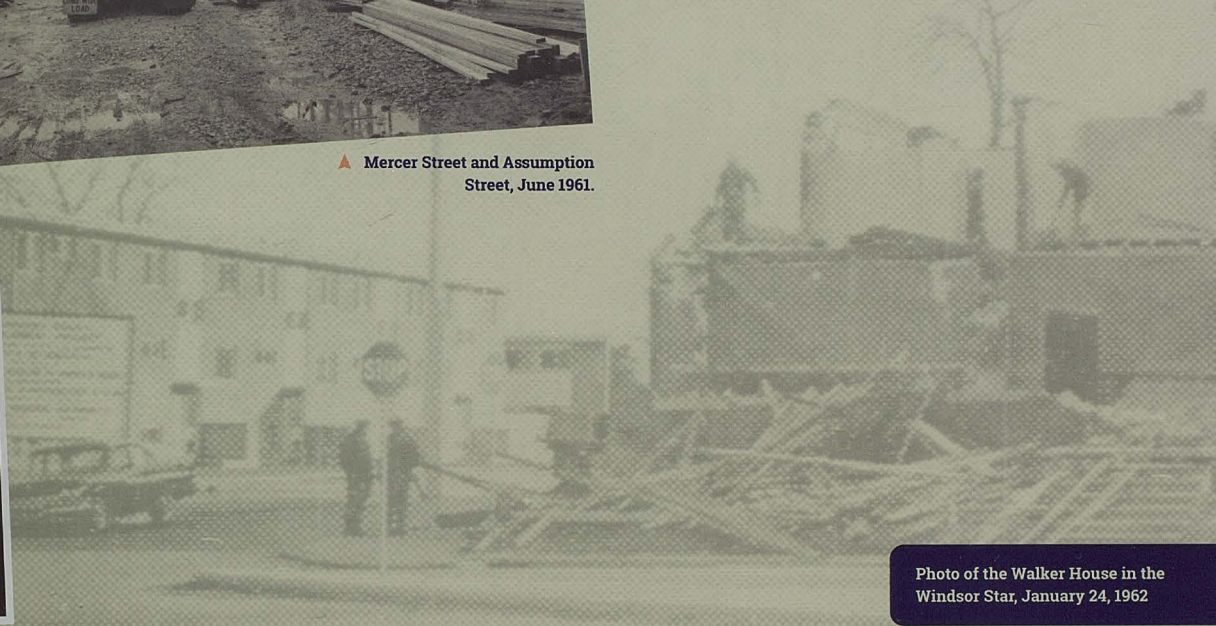


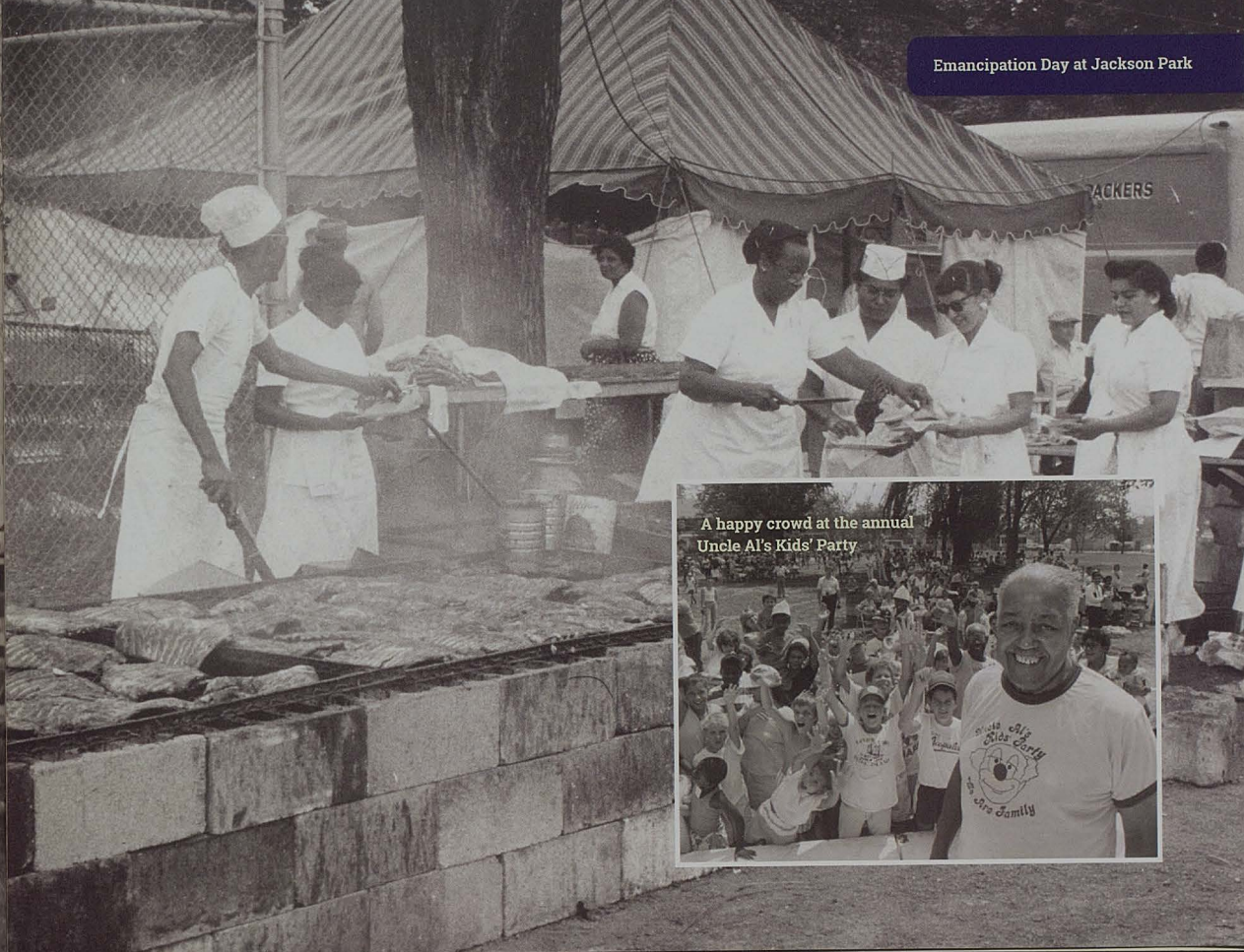
Photo of the Walker House in the Windsor Star, January 24, 1962

However, images, documents, artifacts, and above all, the narratives of current and former residents who remember the heyday of the McDougall Street Corridor ensure that the story of this proud, resilient, thriving Black community will continue to be told.

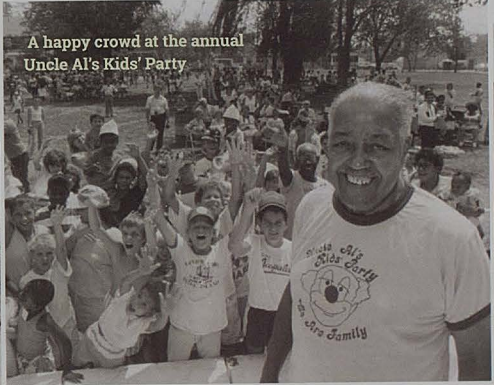


▲ The Reverend Mack Brown with First Baptist Church members

▶ A First Baptist Church picnic



Emancipation Day at Jackson Park



A happy crowd at the annual Uncle Al's Kids' Party

Emancipation parade
on Ouellette Avenue



Acknowledgments

This commemorative booklet is part of a larger project, We Were Here: Bringing the Stories of Windsor's McDougall Street Corridor to Life, which includes a comprehensive website, a walking tour supported by a mobile app, placemaking signage, and research towards potential cultural district designation.

Members of the core project team (lead researcher Willow Key, Idriss Askour, Rino Bortolin, Irene Moore Davis, Dr. Sarah Glassford, Dr. Heidi Jacobs, Kelly-Anne Johnson, Dr. Lee Rodney, and Dr. Anneke Smit) are grateful for the assistance of Johnie Chase, Sydney Fuerth, Lauren Lopez, Laura Gonzalez Mantila, Leslie McCurdy, Dorian Moore, Shane Potvin, Edyta Saklak, Zhenia Tomé, Randy Topliffe, and Teajai Travis.

The project team wishes to thank the many Black community members who agreed to be interviewed and/or who provided helpful images, documents, and materials: Phil Alexander, Nancy Allen, Della Bost, Shantelle Browning-Morgan, Carmen Carter, Gale Carter, Rodney Davis, Kim Elliott, Dr. Kevin Ellsworth, Elise Harding-Davis, Karl Kersey, Lois Larkin, Florence Logan, Daniel Marcuz, Patricia McCurdy, Irene Moore Davis, Barbara Porter, Deb Remekie, George Kirk Scott, Kimberly Simmons, Cherie Steele-Sexton, Clayton Talbert, Jr., Lana Talbot, Edith Thomas, Fred Thomas, Karen Thomas, Tracy Thomas, Marium Tolson-Murty, Teajai Travis, Anna Walls, Tramaine Whited, and the Wilson sisters (Faye, Linda, Bonnie, Sandra, and Vernetta.) We are especially grateful for the materials made available by the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection, now part of the Leddy Library Archives at the University of Windsor, the Northstar Cultural Community Centre, the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, and the Archives of Ontario.

Special thanks to the partner organizations, Centre for Cities at the Faculty of Law, University of Windsor, Leddy Library, Essex County Black Historical Research Society, and Parallel 42 Systems, and to the funders, My Main Street, Economic Developers Council of Ontario, Canadian Urban Institute, and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Educator Ada Kelly Whitney



Image Credits in the order that they appear

- **Front cover:** ARMBBA delegates at First Baptist Church Windsor, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, Archives of Ontario
- Bishop C.L. Morton with members of Mount Zion Church, courtesy of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum
- View of Windsor in the mid twentieth century, courtesy of Windsor Civic Square Urban Design Study, 1991
- Abandoned military barracks in Windsor, courtesy of Museum Windsor
- Mary Ann Shadd Cary, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada
- Henry Bibb, from Henry Bibb, Narrative of the life and adventures of Henry Bibb, an American slave, written by himself (New York, 1849)
- Tower of Freedom Monument by artist Ed Dwight, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- A crowd gathered at the Reaching Out Mural, courtesy of Donna Mayne
- An early twentieth century postcard, courtesy of the Northstar Cultural Community Centre
- Children at a picnic, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, Archives of Ontario
- A church gathering, 1950s, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, Archives of Ontario
- First Baptist Church, courtesy of Southwestern Ontario Digital Archive
- BME Church, courtesy of Museum Windsor
- Miss Sepia Pageant contestants, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Dr. H.D. Taylor, from The Long Road by Charlotte Perry
- The Walker House, courtesy of Windsor Community Archives
- "Labor at Landrum Hall" and "Election Meeting at Landrum Hall," courtesy of the Windsor Star
- Robert L. Dunn, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Hour-A-Day Study Club hosting home economics training at the home of James and Ardella Jacobs, courtesy of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum
- Windsor Art and Literary Club, from Charlotte Perry, The Long Road
- A gathering of Masons, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, Archives of Ontario
- Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in Wigle Park, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Pivots Club, courtesy of The Pittsburgh Courier
- Fred Thomas, courtesy of Sydnie Moore
- Cock Brothers Baseball Team, courtesy of Rodney Davis
- Dayus Roofing Baseball Team, courtesy of Rodney Davis
- Emancipation Parade, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Waiter Perry, Mr. Emancipation, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Cover of the 1957 issue of Progress, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Members of the Hour-A-Day Study Club hosting Mary McLeod Bethune, courtesy of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum
- Scene from an Emancipation Parade, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Officers and Members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion in Windsor, 1916, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- "Negro Battalion Will Be Recruited," courtesy of The Windsor Star
- Photo from a 1950s First Baptist Church picnic, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, Archives of Ontario
- Revellers gather at the Frontier Social Club, courtesy of the family of George Thomas, Northstar Cultural Community Centre Collection
- Mercer Street and Assumption Street, June 1961, courtesy of Southwestern Ontario Digital Archive
- Photo of the Walker House in the Windsor Star, January 24, 1962, courtesy of the Windsor Star
- The Reverend Mack Brown with First Baptist Church members, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy Fonds, Archives of Ontario
- Photos from a First Baptist Church picnic, courtesy of the Alvin D. McCurdy Fonds, Archives of Ontario
- Emancipation Day at Jackson Park, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- A happy crowd at the annual Uncle Al's Kids' Party, courtesy of Cherie Steele-Sexton
- Emancipation parade on Ouellette Avenue, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- Ada Kelly Whitney, courtesy of the E. Andrea Moore Heritage Collection
- **Back cover:** View of 129 McDougall Street towards the river, courtesy of Southwestern Ontario Digital Archive



McDougall Street
CORRIDOR

T MARKET

VET

VETERAN PLUMBING & HEATING

MY MAIN STREET
MA RUE PRINCIPALE



Canadian Urban
Institute Institut
Urbain du Canada

Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

Canada